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SOME MODERN
SUBSTITUTES
* * * * * FOR * * * * *
CHRISTIANITY

By
GEORGE WOLFE SHINN, D.D.



*The JOHN J. and HANNA M. McMANUS
and MORRIS N. and CHESLEY V. YOUNG
Collection*

SOME MODERN SUB-
STITUTES FOR ❁ ❁ ❁
CHRISTIANITY ❁ ❁ ❁

A CONSIDERATION
OF THE CLAIMS OF THEOSOPHY,
CHRISTIAN SCIENCE, SPIRITUALISM, SOCIALISM
AND AGNOSTICISM, AND OF THE REASONS FOR DECLIN-
ING TO ACCEPT ANY ONE OF THESE SYS-
TEMS AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR
CHRISTIANITY

BY

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**The JOHN J. and HANNA M. McMANUS
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A WORD OF EXPLANATION.

It is amazing with what ease some people change their religion. Last week they were members of a branch of the Christian Church; to-day they are postulants for admission to some strange new sect. What they once believed they must now deny. How is it? There are several explanations suggested. One is that they have never really understood the claims and the nature of Christianity. It is God's final revelation to men, and it contains every excellent feature that has a foundation in truth. What is good anywhere else is found at its best in Christianity. But some have not been well grounded in the principles of Christ's religion, nor do they know how it originated. Their superficial knowledge is but a poor defence against the sophistry of the zealous propagandist of the new "ism," and they yield.

There are others who, being still more superficial, regard religion somewhat as they do politics or the social excitement of the hour. They consequently fall in with the current, and are for the time anything that society about them happens to be. Some of these vagaries in religion may be mere "fads," to be changed at will and frequently.

Not all, however, who fall away from Christianity are

superficial folk. There are some whose very seriousness and thoughtfulness incline them toward the consideration of religious questions. Unhappily they are not always well guided in their investigations, and sometimes see but the best side of the new systems presented by ardent and enthusiastic people. Sometimes impatience at the slow progress of Christianity and disappointment because of the imperfect lives of its advocates may lead them to listen all the more readily to the pretensions of those who hope to make the wilderness speedily blossom as the rose and usher in the universal reign of peace and prosperity.

There are few persons so worthy of sincere pity as those who turn away from Christianity to anything else in their eagerness to hasten the golden age, and then find themselves mistaken.

The waking up from dreams must come. The realization that they have blundered must be part of the experience of those who desert God's way to accept man's way, and it cannot be other than painful.

The advocates of erroneous systems are very zealous in spreading their views. They make large use of the press for this purpose ; and nothing is so easy to be had as pamphlets and tracts telling us, for example, the wonders of Theosophy, the comforts of Spiritualism, and the miracles wrought by Christian Science.

It is not so easy to find literature for popular use designed to meet these claims. If such literature had been abundant, this little book had not appeared.

What is contained in the pages following was delivered originally in the form of lectures in different places, with the view of warning any who might be influenced

by the adroit and persistent presentation of their views by these different classes of errorists.

2 Another motive which prompted the delivery of the lectures was the fact that the silence of the pulpit was being misinterpreted. Because so little was said, it was thought by some that very little could be said, and that somehow these new antagonists of the old Faith were so strong that it were wiser to let them alone.

3 In the judgment of friends who heard these lectures they were helpful to people who were perplexed at hearing their religion attacked by those who declared they had something better to offer in place of Christianity; and so the lectures are now put in this form with the hope that they may be helpful to others, perhaps to some who have been led away from their allegiance to Christ, the Divine Master, but who in their heart of hearts are desiring to return.

That they may be useful in keeping some from falling under the influence of error, and in reclaiming any who have almost made shipwreck of faith, is the sincere prayer of the author.

Inasmuch as these topics were originally treated as lectures, it may be that this book will supply a new course for those who seek something to read to the people at the less formal services held through the week, or it may suggest a much better course of instructions.

No claim is made for profundity or elegance in these pages. They are only simple statements of the truth for the people.

Those who seek a more scholarly treatment of the topics can readily find it elsewhere.

The materials for the preparation of these chapters

have been gathered from so many sources that it would be impossible to refer to all here without overcrowding the pages. Grateful acknowledgments are made to those whose thoughts or words have been adopted, or whose suggestions have been considered.

WHAT ARE WE ASKED TO GIVE UP ?
WHAT DO THEY OFFER IN PLACE OF IT ?

I.

WHAT ARE WE ASKED TO GIVE UP? WHAT DO THEY OFFER IN PLACE OF IT?

SUPPOSE that the reader and the writer had been accustomed to making voyages to Europe on a line of steamers which for speed, safety, and convenience we had always found to be satisfactory. Suppose that some one were to approach us in the interest of a recently formed navigation company that had just launched a new sort of craft, with a hitherto unknown motive power and strangely constructed machinery. What would we do?

If we had any regard for comfort, or convenience, or safety, we would make inquiries about these new contrivances before we trusted them. Ordinary prudence would prompt that much anyhow; but we would probably go still further, and make some comparisons between the stanch and well-tried steamers, on which we had sped our way over the seas in storms and calms, and this odd-looking, strangely propelled thing which had never yet made a voyage, and which, even to our untrained eyes, as she lies in her dock has a suspicious look. We cannot but think of the possibility of her going down in mid-ocean, or being swept helplessly onward at the mercy of the first heavy storm.

If, when we turn away from the vessel to learn something of her history—how she was built, and by whom and for what purpose—we should find eccentricity, to put it mildly, we would be even more cautious. We would not care to run risks on an untried craft, built in defiance of all the results of the experience of naval architects, and which it was proposed to move by a force which had never been properly studied and tested.

Here is a readily understood illustration of the truism in common life, that you must not make a change unless you can better yourself.

In all the matters of ordinary life we are not ready to accept a substitute unless it seems better and safer than that for which it is offered. We go cautiously and institute comparisons. We inquire into origins, and ask for results.

When we pass out of the realm of simple every-day matters into the higher realm of religion, can we be less cautious in adopting changes ?

Some substitutes for Christianity are offered in these days. We are asked by people around us to give up this old religion and to adopt new systems which they have devised in its place. We find that we cannot adopt all these systems at once, for a glance at them shows us how contradictory they are. One destroys another. If the eclectic capacity of certain people for adopting new things were very greatly enlarged, no one, even then, could take in, for example, Theosophy and Agnosticism at one and the same time.

Which one, then, of five, can we adopt ? Can we accept any one of them ?

It is the object of these pages to suggest the caution

which we are all urged to employ in our every-day matters. If any one is disposed to consider any one of these proposed substitutes, he should certainly "make haste slowly," and see what he gives up, if he ever relinquishes Christianity, to accept something else. There are, doubtless, many unhappy people to-day who have swung away from the old faith before they had well considered the new. Their next plunge may be into the dark cavern of no faith at all. Let us hope, however, that they may be kept from so sad a fate as that, and be led back to the brightness which shines from Him who is the Light of the world.

Perhaps at the foundation of well-nigh every rejection of Christianity is the failure to understand that a religion cannot be true if it is devised by man. A true religion must come from God. But men have thought that they could make their own religions and change them when they would. Some have supposed that Christianity was simply a code of maxims and wise sayings which originated with a man called Christ, and, therefore, it could be superseded by something else at men's own will. Others have thought that if man originated Christianity, they could accept just what they cared to accept and let the rest go. Hence the attempt to eliminate the supernatural element from the Gospel and to explain away not only everything that is supernatural, but everything that is theological. By this process Christianity becomes simply a code of morals, like the sayings of Marcus Aurelius.

Think of Christianity as having no higher origin than man, and you can reject it at your pleasure. But think of it as from God, and the soul must pay obeisance to

it. Because some have not thought of it as from God, they have offered something else. The old Deists of the eighteenth century presented their substitute. They admitted the existence of God, and that He was the Author of the system of nature. They said : " Let us hold this belief, and give up Christianity altogether. What more do we need as a religion ?" They said : " Let us believe that some great first cause set the world in motion and somehow watches over it still." That was Deism. It flourished for a while during the first half of the eighteenth century, but has now passed away.

After it came a modification of Pantheism, paying outward deference to the religion of Christ ; speaking of it as the highest point in the development of religion, but nevertheless quietly relegating Christianity to the region of outworn faiths. After Pantheism came various substitutes.

The five proposed substitutes to which attention will be called are Theosophy, Christian Science, Spiritualism, Socialism, and Agnosticism.

In order to understand more clearly the history and nature of these proposed substitutes, it will be a helpful preliminary to take a view of the history and nature of Christianity, so that we may see what would be displaced if any one of these substitutes were adopted.

Christianity claims to be a religion from God and a final revelation of God's will to man. It did not originate as something new nineteen centuries ago, but declared itself to be the development and the culmination of all that had preceded it. It was linked in with the purest faith the world had known up to that time, and was proclaimed as the sequel toward which that old

Monotheistic faith had pointed. It gathered up in itself the religious hopes of all the ages. It offered itself as the ideal of all aspirations ; and Christ, who is Christianity, declared Himself to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Christianity claims to be God's final revelation. It professes to be the religion of truth and goodness. It has doctrines which it teaches. It has aims which it sets before men. It would mould human character. Teaching men what is true as to God and what is true as to man, it would influence men to right living. It is not a mere system of doctrines to be intellectually received. Its truths are to be translated into character. It presents Christ as God speaking to men. Its final aim is to have men become like Christ. The more they attain to the likeness of Christ, the more they realize the purpose of this religion.

Christianity as a religion, claiming to be from God, has been before the eyes of men for nineteen centuries. It began obscurely in a province of Palestine. Its Founder was put to death. Its first advocates were men of but slight prominence. Nevertheless it grew. Nothing ever so aggressive as Christianity. Nothing ever so benignant. It came to men claiming to have a message from Deity. More than this, it declared that Deity Himself had come into our humanity ; that God in Christ was reconciling the world unto Himself ; that the great Shepherd of the sheep was seeking the lost ; that the Lord had visited and redeemed His people.

How gracious it was ! It had the voice of mercy. It had all the tenderness of Divine pity. The beating of a loving heart was felt in all that it did. Wherever its

touch was felt there came a healing benediction. Wherever two men heard its message one man regarded the other thenceforth as his brother. It knit the bonds of affection between all classes. It reconciled foes. It made men to be as of one household. They were of one Father, Christ was the Elder Brother of prince and peasant alike, and all men were brethren in the Lord.

Such was and such is Christianity, the religion that claims to be God's final revelation to men.

What wonderful results it brought about ! It changed the condition of the world. It made a revolution in the laws, usages, opinions, and feelings of men. It softened the ferocity of savage tribes. It made proud men humble. It demanded justice for all, and opened channels of beneficence in a hundred directions. It came into every ill and woe of man to bring blessings. A thousand benignant things which may at first seem to be derived from other sources are really the result of the introduction of Christianity. Our civilization, our arts, our freedom, our laws are due in greatest measure to Christianity. Blot this religion out of man's history, and what would that history have been ? What would have been modern civilization to-day without it ?

Why, this religion is so mingled with the life of our day that there is hardly a familiar object around us that does not bear its mark. The world, indeed, has a different aspect because the light of Christianity has fallen upon it.

“ It has broken the monotony of thought and set the minds of the world in action.” It has frowned upon injustice and moulded governments according to the principles of rectitude. It has evoked and refined the best

sympathies of man, and has helped social order and progress. It has purified the fountains of life and filled the soul of man with reverence and love for God.

But not only has this religion already accomplished wondrous results, it pledges itself to produce still more. "What a world this will be" exclaims one, "when Christianity shall have realized its sublime mission ! Sin's thunder-storms will not always beat on the world ; a celestial calmness will one day come. It will not always be tossed about like a vessel in a storm. It will one day repose on the calm sea of infinite love. The centre of light is already planted in its moral heavens. The darkness is passing away, the morning advances. Conflicting elements shall be hushed. Clouds shall melt before the sunshine ; every mountain shall be made low and every valley shall be exalted, and this world shall become radiant with the light of heaven and shall resound with heaven's own music."

This is the religion we are asked to give up. This is that for which men propose substitutes.

WHAT IS THEOSOPHY?

II.

WHAT IS THEOSOPHY?

It is not an easy task to tell what it is. First of all, its leading principles are not readily translated into simple and untechnical phrase. Then its advocates differ among themselves as to what these leading principles are, and change or abandon them at will. It appears to be an effort to build up something on the foundation of the old Eastern "wisdom religions," as they were called, and to revive the odd fancies which men have held concerning life and destiny.

There is no necessary connection between individuals and schools who have been called Theosophists. It simply seems to be a convenient designation for those who seek to make use of portions of these ancient speculations of the East. Of late years there has come into existence a new society of Theosophists.

Two names rise up into prominence when this modern organization is mentioned: Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott. They were the founders of it in November, 1875. The declared purposes of the new organization were as follows: 1. To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without regard to race, creed, sex, caste, or color. 2. To promote the study of Aryan and other Eastern literatures, religions, philoso-

phies, and sciences. 3. To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the psychic powers latent in man.

Madame Blavatsky was regarded as the mouthpiece to the Western world of the Wisdom Religions of the East. She was declared to have received her knowledge from certain adepts in occult science who had instructed her in its mysteries and deep philosophy. Her instructors are said to be the Mahatmas. These Mahatmas are great beings, who have attained to high stages of human perfectibility. These beings cannot be seen by common mortals, only by those who have attained the same plane of consciousness. They are not angels or spirits, but possibly reincarnations of men, or men too wise to die. The Mahatmas may or may not wear bodies ; they can travel with lightning-like velocity, and are always at the call of such of their disciples as have reached the proper stage of sublimation.

One of their most common performances seems to be to travel many miles to drop letters from the ceiling to the floor of the rooms where their disciples happen to be. " But," said Madame Blavatsky, " the world is not ready yet either to recognize the Mahatmas nor to profit by their appearance." " They have been met on the shores of the Ganges and in the ruins of Thebes, in the arid and desolate plains of the Great Sahara and in the caves of the earth. They may be found everywhere, but make themselves known only to those who have devoted their lives to unselfish study, and are not likely to turn back." Note that the Mahatmas are a very important feature of modern Theosophy. You must believe in the existence of these human beings who may be all the way from a hundred to many thousand years old, who may

be the result of a succession of reincarnations, and who have the power of appearing and disappearing at will, and of travelling from place to place quicker than the stars that shoot athwart the sky. The founder of the society says that they taught her what she knew of the principles of Theosophy.

Of the strange history of Madame Blavatsky it is needless to speak at length. She was born in the north of Russia in 1831. Her early life was filled with remarkable adventures. When she was sixteen years old she married a man nearly seventy. She had been married but a few months when she suddenly left her husband and her home. Later on she burst upon the world as a spiritualist, and then still later as a teacher of the occult philosophy of the East and as a founder of a new society.

The interval from 1848, when she left her husband, to 1857 is an unexplained gap in her existence. Her friends say that she was then in Tibet, studying the secrets of the Mahatmas, but others declare that she led a wandering life, being sometimes in Paris, in London, in New Orleans, and elsewhere. No one knows just where and why. In 1858 she appeared as a convert to Spiritualism. Some years later she set up a spiritualistic society in Cairo.

Her prominence in this country began to grow in 1874, when she made the acquaintance of Colonel Olcott.

Colonel Olcott had been a soldier of the Union and an agent of the Government in various capacities. He settled down to the practice of law and the pursuit of literature. He became well known as a newspaper correspondent. He first met Madame Blavatsky in Vermont, where he was sent by a New York newspaper firm to

examine into some supposed spiritualistic manifestations by the Eddy brothers. Madame Blavatsky made her appearance there, and she seems to have soon gained a very willing disciple. He says, in one of his books, that "little by little she let me know of the existence of Eastern adepts and their powers, and gave me proof of her control over the occult forces of nature by a multitude of phenomena."

By and by Olcott was initiated into the inner circle, and received written communications from some of the Mahatmas—at least so he declares. Never was there a more accommodating convert than this soldier. He dropped all secular work to aid her in establishing her new society in different parts of the world—a society that contemplates the formation of a Universal Brotherhood, based upon a revival of some of these old religious principles held in the East. This new society is to adapt to modern uses these ancient beliefs, and of course their adoption means the overturning of Christianity and the substitution of something which they suppose is better than Christianity.

We shall see later on the contrast between the two systems, as we study the doctrines which modern Theosophy asks us to accept.

Says one of its recent exponents, "Theosophy is to be found here and there in the ancient Aryan literatures, remnants of it in the Zoroastrian and other ancient religions and philosophies, and fragments in the Greek pantheistic philosophy. Nowhere, however, had any complete outline been collected until about the third century, when a school of New Platonic Philosophy was opened at Alexandria, in Egypt. This school gradually elaborated

a system of philosophy and religion, in which were embodied all the elements of theosophical teaching which had withstood the crucible of time."

These philosophies held three chief beliefs :

"1. That there is a supreme, inscrutable, all-pervading and absolute Deity, from which all nature, visible and invisible, has proceeded, and into which it will return."

Observe the expression "from which," for the personality of Deity is denied.

"2. That man is an imperishable entity, of divine and of infinite potentiality as a progressive manifestation of divine nature."

We shall see what this progression includes, and how it ends in man's annihilation as an individual.

"3. That there are certain intelligent forces in nature, also psychic and spiritual powers in man, which are capable of development and of use by man."

This refers in part to the occult sciences, which have always excited curiosity.

It will be noted later on how these three general principles may be regarded as including some of the views promulgated by modern theosophical societies. Many attempts have been made to adopt and use this strange jumble of Eastern religion, philosophy, and science. It was hoped by some that the mastery of its principles, and the attending supernatural illumination, might admit them to a knowledge of the mystery of being, and that they would thus find the solution of every difficulty in science and of all the hard problems in the spiritual world. They expected a miraculous knowledge of physics and special spiritual insight.

Persons who are interested in the history of these

efforts to appropriate parts of Eastern mysticism will find some strange chapters recounting the story of Paracelsus (1493-1541), and later on the Rosicrucians, and finally that of Jacob Bohm (1575-1624).

Let us now look at some of the doctrines of modern Theosophy as they appear when stripped of their strange verbiage and put into our common speech.

First of all, what do they believe as to God? They deny the personality of Deity, and they set forth definitions which represent God as “an impersonal thought, permeating and interpenetrating all things, so that God is all and all is God.” In other words, it is Pantheism.

Mrs. Besant, in her book, “Why I became a Theosophist,” says: “The next matter impressed on the student of theosophy is the denial of a personal God. Theosophy is pantheistic; God is all and all is God.”

You will observe that it is not God behind all things, distinct from His works, sending them forth with an intelligent aim to do His will, but very God Himself. The stone, the bird, the tree are parts of God. Observe, then, that when one becomes a Theosophist he gives up his belief in a personal Deity and accepts instead “an impersonal God, who cannot see, or feel, or hear, who has no sympathy, no love, no thought.”

2. Closely allied with this conception of God is the other thought, that *all things are fixed by an eternal necessity*. “There is the iron law of a remorseless necessity, the fatality of unchanging and unchangeable force. There is no possibility of setting it aside. The only thing you can do is to submit.”

The Theosophist sets forth God as the law of all

things in the universe, and the universe as being under the law of fate. In other words, here we have the old fatalism of the East. You are to think of the universe as a great piece of machinery which goes crashing on according to immutable laws and carrying you with it. You have no power to change anything. Prayer is useless. Your agony is nothing to any intelligent cause in all the universe. You are in the inexorable path of fate. Your highest wisdom is to learn to submit to a fate that rules all with resistless force.

The Theosophist tells us then the dismal old story of fatalism. You must give up all your hitherto accustomed thinking about God as the loving Father, and begin now to think of changeless fate, which sweeps all on with pitiless force if you accept Theosophy.

A vast difference, surely, between the two conceptions : A wise, loving Father who plans the welfare of His children. Remorseless Fate !

3. *What does Theosophy teach us about man ?*

It tells us many strange things concerning man. Thus man, it says, consists of one spirit, three souls, a life principle, and two bodies—seven distinct things ; hence the expression, “ Man is a septenary being.” The spirit is indivisible and impenetrable ; the soul is a trinity in unity—spiritual, human, and animal. But there are three souls : the spiritual soul, the mind, and the desires.

The body is really two, the outer being the physical body, and the inner one being the astral. The outer body, at death, is soon decomposed, and returns to its constituent elements. The astral body may exist for awhile after death and be the shadowy continuance of

the person who died. It hovers over the dead body, but finally passes away. The animal soul lives for a while after the death of the body until it reaches a definite stage and is separated from the other soul, the ego, when it goes into the place of the souls of animals. The ego, the personality, goes on through a land of dreams until it awakes and seeks to be reincarnated, to take a new body ; and this process may be repeated many times. Reincarnation is one of the distinctive teachings of Theosophy. Your soul—your ego—must live in some other body again. Perhaps again and again you may be reincarnated in a variety of forms. As one has said : “ John Smith, who was vigorous and self-reliant, may reappear as Mary Jones, timid, weak, and dependent. Sarah Thompson, a refined and cultivated gentlewoman, may come back as a burly, pushing, not over-scrupulous politician.” You will observe that “ in reincarnation the matter of sex is not arbitrary. A man may be reincarnated as a woman, and a woman as a man. The father of one family may come back to be the mother of another family. The quiet, self-restrained, dignified maiden of to-day may be, in her next process of reincarnation, the bootblack who plies his business on the corner of the city street. The man of wealth now may have to appear next as the ragged beggar, and the day laborer may become in the next change the refined gentleman or the cultivated gentlewoman. No one knows how many times he may have to be reincarnated. Again and again we must go through this process of living in clay tenements “ in revolving sex, in continually changing conditions, from profoundest joy to keenest sorrow, from munificent wealth to abject

want, passing through ranges of utter comedy to the voiceless agony of tragedy that has no sunlight."

And what does Theosophy teach us is the end of all?

After all these reincarnations, "when the last round of the last race shall be made, and when the ego shall attain to that condition where it can remember all its past reincarnations and can recall all the incidents and feelings of each separate consciousness on earth; when it shall have attained to the full knowledge of all its aspects of principle and law in each separate experience"—what then?

Then it will "enter into the eternal and final all, and become an integral part of the great abyss of impersonality called God." The Eastern mind calls this Nirvana. Stripped of all imagery, it is nothing but annihilation. The blotting out of the soul as a separate existence, to become part of the impersonal Deity, is a very different thing from the vague phrase often used, "Absorption in God." The latter somehow implies continuous blissful existence, but, says Hardwick, the oldest literature of Buddhism will scarcely suffer us to doubt that Gautama intended by Nirvana nothing short of absolute annihilation, the destruction of all elements which constitute existence. If we are told that modern Theosophy does not adopt the annihilation view of the Buddhist, but the view of the Brahmin, which is reversion to original oneness with Deity, the reply is that the denial of the personality of Deity and the denial of human personality compel us to think of such oneness with an impersonal Deity as an absorption which is the equivalent of extinction.

Here, then, are the leading principles of Theosophy :

1. A Deity who is simply the sum of all things, without personality.

2. Everything governed by unchanging force. Karma is fatalism.

3. Man, a complex being passing through various changes, being often reincarnated and finally reaching Nirvana, or nothingness.

This is what you are asked to accept in exchange for Christian faith. This is what the Theosophist tells you is so superior to the religion of Christ.

Compare the two.

Think of the idea of God as the Theosophist expresses it, and then as it is set forth by the Christian. You have heard the idea of an impersonal Deity governed by fate.

Think, now, of the Christian's Supreme Being, the Creator of all things, visible and invisible. A God who is back of nature, imminent in nature, but not the mere sum of created things. He has ever an eye to see and an ear to hear, a heart to feel, and is tender toward His children. He reveals Himself as their Father, and in the incarnate Christ welcomes all to His loving heart.

Which of the two conceptions seems to you the nobler ? There can be but one answer.

Our own personality implies the existence of the Divine personality, and the Divine personality carries with it the ideas of an intelligent first cause, a wise and powerful Creator, who works upon a plan ; a beneficent Providence, who provides for the wants of His creatures ; a loving Father, who is ever watchful over His children —loving them with tender compassion, coming into the

realm of their own humanity, and drawing them lovingly into communion with Him.

This is the conception of Deity which Christianity presents.

Think, now, of the contrasted ideas of happiness.

Ultimate happiness, according to Christianity, is the blissful state of nearness to God and of likeness to Him. The man retains his personality, and is ever growing more like unto God. It is always the relationship of a child to a father. However great the Creator and Preserver of the universe, however wise, He is eternally our Father.

When a Christian dies he is done forevermore with pain and tears. No coming back again to dwell in a mortal body. No reincarnation, to go through again the weary round of earthly cares and trials. His soul passes into Paradise, to await there the joyful resurrection of the body, when the Son of God returns in glory. Then comes the end, when this dispensation shall cease ; when the redeemed of the Lord shall be welcomed to yet higher bliss.

Compare the religion of Christ with Theosophy. Just so soon as you put the two together, it is as if the sunlight struck the great fog bank and the mists rolled away. Christianity is the sunlight of truth ; Theosophy, the mists of human error. Christianity is the religion of hope ; Theosophy, the religion of despair. Christianity, the religion that urges you to develop your best, to live in the sunlight of God's favor here, and promises a continuance of that sunlight eternally, ever-ascending progress in holiness, ever-increasing likeness to Christ, ever-enlarging capacities for bliss. No

annihilation, but eternal life in the nearer presence of God.

The life of heaven is the life of sinless blessedness. It is the consummation of every good desire, every holy motive, and every noble effort. It is the Christian life in its advancing fruition, the ever-growing realization of knowledge and holiness. It is the perpetual but painless striving toward perfection. It is the fuller realization of the life of love in the presence of Him whose most blessed attribute is love.

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN SCIENCE?

III.

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN SCIENCE?

ONE of the most remarkable movements in modern times is the growth of what is known to-day as Christian Science.

In some of its features it is not an absolutely new thing, although it *claims* to be entirely a new discovery, and presses itself upon the attention of the world as a substitute for views which have been long held and cherished. It antagonizes science, philosophy, and religion, and offers itself as a new revelation, which demands the allegiance of us all.

Although largely concerned with the healing of the sick, it does not confine itself to that one department, but would modify our conceptions of God, of man, of matter, of spirit, of sin, of the present life and of future destiny.

Its advocates, drawn largely from the number of those who have hitherto been in the active membership of the Church, declare that they have passed beyond the crude and erroneous views which they once thought were tenable to a newer and wider plane of thought, from whose heights they look with pity upon those who are held in what they now style the bondage of error.

It is, therefore, perfectly proper to examine this new

movement, especially as its adherents are presenting their views industriously in many of our communities, and, by unsettling the religious faith of some, are seeking to withdraw them from their allegiance to the Christian Church. Whatever else may be said of Christian Science, most of its forms result practically in the presentation of a substitute for the Christianity of Christ and His apostles.

Let us see what Christian Science is. In doing so, we assume the honesty of many of its advocates, while deploring the errors into which they have fallen. The plan will not be to indulge in ridicule or invective, but to point out the fallacies upon which the system is built, that those who read may be warned.

While there are various bodies who call themselves Christian Scientists, it must be remembered that the claim to the discovery of Christian Science is made by one person, Mrs. Eddy ; and that although there are different persons who call themselves Christian Scientists, the alleged discoverer of the system does not acknowledge any persons as genuine Christian Scientists except they cling absolutely to the views which she holds. She calls heretics all who do not set forth all its principles precisely as she does. She claims that no variation is possible. We are, therefore, compelled to think of the system as she and her friends publish its tenets.

But before we examine what Mrs. Eddy declares Christian Science is as she discovered it, it is helpful to study what it is not. First, then, it is not faith cure. It is not mind cure or hypnotism. It is not spiritualism. In the popular mind these are sometimes con-

founded with it. It radically differs from all these in its claims. It does not profess to cure sickness by the agency of faith, not by the transfer of will power from the weaker to the stronger, nor by the exercise of any magnetic influence resident in brain and nerves whereby a healing current is made to flow from one to another ; nor does it invoke the ministrations of disembodied spirits, whereby subtle spiritual aid is given to those who need it. No ; its advocates think it something apart from all of these, and repudiate any explanations based upon them.

What is it? According to Mrs. Eddy, she discovered it in 1866, and called it Christian Science. Her own account of the discovery is contained in these words :

“ In the year 1866 I discovered the science of metaphysical healing, and named it Christian Science. God had been previously fitting me during many years for the reception of a final revelation of the absolute principle of scientific mind healing. Christian Science unfolds the demonstrable fact that matter possesses neither sensation nor life ; that human experience shows the falsity of all material things ; the only sufferer is mortal mind, since being in God cannot suffer. All real being is the Divine Mind and Idea. Life, Truth, and Love are all-powerful and ever-present. Sin, sickness, disease, and death is the false testimony of false material sense ; that this false sense evolves in belief a subjective state of mortal mind which this same mind calls matter, thereby shutting out the true sense of spirit. My discovery that erring mortal, misnamed mind produces all the organism and action of the mortal body set my thoughts to work in new channels, and led up to my demonstration of the

proposition that Mind is all and matter is naught, as the leading factor in Mind Science."

Here you have Mrs. Eddy's claim to an original discovery. It is not put into very intelligible phrase, but as for that matter, the whole book is not a model of perspicuous writing.

It is quite likely that this lack of simplicity and clearness in all the literature of Christian Science has commended it to some who have supposed there must be something wonderfully valuable back of such obscurity. It is not unusual to find disciples who express the hope that some day they may get hold of it. Just now it is rather beyond them.

Unhappily for the claim of discovery, there has very recently been published an account of the life and philosophy of one Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, of Portland, Me., from which it would seem that for a number of years he practised some kind of healing, and in 1862 received Mrs. Eddy as a patient. She became greatly interested in his teachings, and was one of a number who at a later period seem to have elaborated the suggestions received from his teachings. However, it is not material to trace the likeness between the two systems, nor to note how one may have suggested the other, further than to question the asserted originality of Christian Science as discovered in 1866.

Her book, which is a bulky volume of many pages, is not easy to read. It is written in stilted language, abounding in difficult and unusual words, to some of which she attaches definitions of her own. The book is a strange mixture of science, metaphysics, interpretations and applications of Scripture, startling statements

of alleged facts, novel explanations of natural phenomena, and considerable which perhaps none but the initiated can hope to understand.

What are the principles of Christian Science?

1. The leading feature is that everything is Mind, and that there is but one Mind, which is God. Our bodies, the stars, the trees, the rivers, the walls of a building have no real existence, but are only ideas of mind, something like the visions that come before us in dreams, all unreal, without actual existence or properties.

2. As matter is unreal, matter cannot feel or know anything, and hence matter cannot be sick. Mind, being perfect, cannot be sick either. Hence there is no sickness in the world. What we call sickness is only a belief—not a belief of the All-Divine Mind, but of the mortal mind. That belief is unreal. It has no substantial reality. The mortal mind is unreal.

Once get the belief destroyed, and you have destroyed all sickness. You may go further than this and destroy death also, for there is no death. It is only a false belief which the Truth concerning life annihilates.

According to the alleged discoverer of this system, her theory has been verified. She claims to have prevented disease in others, and to have restored the sick by chasing away these baseless beliefs. The book abounds in a large number of cases of reported cures of sick persons, and contains the claim that she has actually raised the dying. (Page 426, "Science and Health.")

But the philosophy of the book includes, as was said, other matters besides the cure of disease. It deals with the awful mystery of sin. *Sin, according to Christian*

Science, is only another error similar to disease, and is to be cured in the same way—that is, you are to get rid of the belief in sin, and then you get rid of sin. It is only a false belief which the mortal mind cherishes. But sin and the mortal mind being equally non-existent, you chase both away when you bring truth to bear upon them. “Healing the sick and reforming the sinner” are processes of the same nature. Then the same process goes still further. It abolishes death. Even though people die now, the hope is cherished that as the principles of the science are developed and are better understood there will come a period when there will be no more dying. There is no real need of dying now, they say ; but somehow this false idea of death has so fastened itself upon the race that humanity cannot shake it off, and so people go on seeming to die just as from the beginning.

Let us put these leading beliefs into a brief sentence. It runs thus :

Christian Science teaches that there is no such thing as matter, or individual mind, or a personal God, or sin, or death.

That is Christian Science. If you accept it, you must cease to believe in the existence of matter. You must ignore your individual consciousness. You must not think of God as a personal Being. You must cease to think of the actuality of sin. You must ignore death. That is what is required of you.

Think of it. According to Christian Science you have no personality. God has no personality. God is simply the sum of the Universe. Man is an emanation from God. Man is God, as one of the factors whose sum

makes God. Matter is only a fiction of the mind. It comes into being only when we think about it. There is no matter until you think about matter. Then it seems to come into being, but it is non-existent.

Disease has no reality. It is only a physical thing, and physical things are only in the imagination. A man may think he is sick, or deformed, or crushed, or broken, but he is really none of these. He only thinks he is lame, or ill, or misshapen. Sickness or deformities are wholly imaginary, and hence need no material remedies. All you have to do is to get rid of the erroneous thought.

It may seem to some, in stating these points, that it was merely the vagary of some one's imagination, or the twisting out of shape the views which are advocated. But for every statement here put down there is the authority of the text-books themselves upon the subject, and the openly declared views of Christian Scientists.

Now, let us see where this new teaching stands. First of all, we find that *it is absolutely antagonistic to all the learning of the day*, so far as the study of the physical sciences go. If there is no matter, if matter is not real, why study botany? The leaves of the flower you would analyze are but phantoms, not real. Why study astronomy? Those distant orbs have no existence if there is no matter. They but seem to be there in the heavens.

Why study anything? "Christian Science proposes the extinction of all belief in matter and the insistence upon the fact that matter is nothing but an illusion." If so, why study its properties?

Perhaps it has never occurred to some advocates of

this system that *the logic which would enable one to prove the non-existence of matter would more certainly prove the non-existence of spirit.* There is just as strong evidence that the body has a real existence as that the soul has a real existence. As one well said, "If my consciousness of my bodily members and their states be not trustworthy, then nothing to me is trustworthy, and I am left to flounder about in the darkness through the bogs of nothingness."

It is a somewhat new demand that we should be called upon to prove the existence of matter. The great difficulty hitherto has been to convince men that there is anything but matter in this world. The struggle has been to teach them to have faith in spiritual verities. Materialism has been the basis of most forms of unbelief. It has encouraged Atheism or the denial of God, and it has encouraged Pantheism inasmuch as if the personality of Deity be denied God becomes a mere force in matter. It has favored Positivism, for that makes God and spirit mere matters of education.

Now, it becomes necessary to prove the existence of matter. A strange task indeed. Let those who deny its existence prove their denial. When that is done, we shall know what step to take next.

Christian Science, then, sets itself against human consciousness, and against all of the treasures of human learning relating to matter, its existence, and its properties.

2. Then, in the next place, *Christian Science rejects the clear and simple teachings of the Sacred Scriptures.* Although not always in words opposing or denying their teachings, and although freely quoting them and speak-

ing approvingly of them, it virtually denies what the Scriptures seem to reveal.

It reduces the Bible from an inspired message to a collection of disjointed declarations capable of being twisted as you please. It puts meanings upon words which they never had before, and arbitrarily declares that such words mean thus. You can read anything you please into *any* book if you are permitted to change the meanings of words to suit your system.

Some pages of this book are devoted to a glossary to set forth what the author calls the real meaning of certain terms. Perhaps you would feel somewhat more sure that you had got nearer the real meaning of these words if it were not that the same word may have many meanings. Read any meaning you please into words and change it when you please, and you have the field before you.

It is not necessary to quote from the Glossary to show the truth of the declaration that they make the Scriptures another Book from what it was intended to be—one that means just what they are pleased to have it mean, whereas it was designed to be a revelation.

Denying the existence of matter and changing the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures, they go on to *deny Personality, both human and divine*. They tell us there is no such thing as the individual mind, and that God is divine principle. We must get rid of the idea of personality as usually understood in the Church.

What shall be said in reply to this denial of personality? It brings up the whole question of whether this universe has been formed and is upheld by abstract law or by a personal agency ; whether there is a perfect God

as the intelligent first cause, or whether God Himself is simply the sum of all things, a diffusive principle.

Now, to call God mere abstract law is really to declare that there is no God, for law is simply a mode of operation. But a law always implies a law-giver. To call God merely the sum of all things is to bring in a large element of materialism, for "matter must form a constituent element of Deity when regarded in such a light." "It is impossible to think of one God existing under such an innumerably divided form and under such divergent and contradictory conditions."

God's personality is shown in and through the material universe which He has made. He pervades and controls it. The universe exhibits a unity which would be impossible without a guiding intelligence back of it, and it exhibits a progressive advancement in better adaptation to higher ends. It seems to be moved along by some intelligence greater than itself, as if some plan were being realized.

Then the personality of God is shown by the manifestation of His spiritual attributes to man. Each man has some inward conviction that the will and purpose of a superior being are at work in the world. Each man has a sense of the distinction between right and wrong, and that implies a moral governor of the universe.

The personality of man is shown first through his own consciousness of having a distinct physical existence which through all the changes of the body remains the same. Then it is shown by the powers of thought and of will, by the consciousness of right and wrong, and by the sense of religion. The recognition of himself under varying circumstances is an evidence of personality.

To deny, then, a personal God and to deny personality to man is but a step toward the denial of everything. Follow it out to the end, and you must declare there is no God, no man, no universe, nothing but blankness.

The inevitable sequence of this reasoning must mean for some persons Atheism, and for others despair.

Now, if the fundamental principles of Christian Science are so fallacious, what is to be said about the claim it is making to be a great curative agency for the healing of diseases and the relief of the sorrows of our present condition ?

1. *If the principles of Christian Science are true, then they are always true, and there never should be any failures.* Cures should follow wherever the principles are observed. But there *are* failures. Some die under the treatment ; and no matter how thorough a believer in Christian Science any one may be, he is not exempt thereby from accident or disease, and some day he must die. It is in vain that blame is thrown on the patient, for it matters not whether he have faith or not, they say. According to its own principles, it ought always to succeed. If it fails in any attempt it shows that there is something wrong in its principles. Failure is not to be explained by reference to the will of God, for God cannot have any will if He is an impersonal being, and, according to Christian Science, He has no personality.

The failure of curative experiments all over the country has made it necessary to interpose the protection of the law over those who are the unhappy subjects of the mistaken zeal of others. It is pathetic to hear so continually the story of human suffering made worse by reliance upon Christian Science.

2. Then, in the next place, *many of the cures supposed to be wrought by Christian Science can be accounted for in other ways.* A large number of sick people get well when they are let alone. Some diseases must run their course, and when their course is run the patient recovers. That is all there is about it. The treatment is to wait and possibly to assist the recuperative energies of nature. The patient will recover whether you use orthodox remedies or Christian Science, or mesmerism, or if you simply let him alone.

Another line of diseases is so dependent upon mental conditions that any change in the dominant mental state has a wholesome effect upon the bodily organism—that is to say, a large number of ailments are largely imaginary, or are made worse by a disordered imagination.

Two of the best tonics ever discovered are hope and fear. Administer one or the other, and you break the perverse hold the imagination has been holding over the will. Then the will being free, the bodily organs obey its behests, and the man is on the way to recovery. As has been said, “Mental impressions, however produced, act through the nervous system upon the organs of the body so as to stimulate or to obstruct their functions. Thus, fright, grief, hope, cheerfulness, determination to get well, or despair, all register themselves in the bodily condition.”

Something might be said here of that strange power known as Hypnotism, by which some curative property may be applied to the mind. Hypnotic suggestion is beginning to be a recognized agency, a sort of mind cure to be tried where such a treatment is suggested by abnormal mental conditions.

Something, too, might be said about *the retarded influence of ordinary remedies*. People grow impatient to get well. They try the regular physician, then they go to another and to another. Finally they reach the Christian Science treatment and get well. They would have got well just as fast had they clung to the first treatment. But they were impatient, and Christian Science gets the credit of the cure really begun by the regular practitioner. Cures are sometimes brought about by ceasing to take the nostrums of the quack doctor. People often get well when they give up hindering their own recovery.

Now, if we can account for many cures claimed by Christian Science, if we are continually seeing that it fails to do what it declares it can do, and if we see that its principles are contrary to common sense and to revelation, then surely it can present no attractions for one who believes in a personal God who rules His world in love, and who at the last will explain all this mystery of sorrow and suffering, and in His own good time will abolish sin and death. Christian Science has been a protest against the materialistic tendencies of the age. Its mission has been to call men's attention to the spiritual side, and with tender sympathy for suffering it has sought to lighten the woes of the sorrowful.

This is all that it means for some people who are thinking favorably of it. They have not yet seen the foundations upon which it is based or the consequences which must follow the adoption of its principles.

To others it seems to bring help by bidding them turn away from the contemplation of their own aches and pains and troubles to other thoughts. But it re-

quires no new system to reinforce common sense in this regard, especially when it is one of the most elementary teachings of Christianity that the afflictions of the present are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.

Why do we need Christian Science to teach us to look at the bright side when Christianity has always taught us that God is doing all things well, and that all the chastenings of the present are for our future welfare ?

When a thunder-storm is rolling up, which is the better course, to deny that there is any storm at all, or to think of it as resulting in benefit ?

Let it be said to all who are looking toward Christian Science that you will find in the Gospel of our Saviour Christ and in the Church He has established a nobler protest against materialism, a stronger plea for the supremacy of the spiritual life, and a deeper gratification of all kindly sympathies. It bids you to pity the sorrowing and to lift them up for the tender, healing touch of the benignant Lord and Father. It promises the time when He shall gather all His children home and death shall be no more.

WHAT IS SPIRITUALISM?

IV.

WHAT IS SPIRITUALISM?

Two preliminary statements seem to be necessary before proceeding to answer the question.

One of these is, that the general subject of the existence of a spiritual world apart from the world of matter is not denied by any believer in Christianity.

If anything shall be said, then, against modern Spiritualism, it is not in the interest of the materialism which denies all spiritual existences and regards the visible world as all there is. The writer is not a Materialist, but a believer in a spiritual life, a spiritual world, and spiritual existences.

The other preliminary statement is that we must have the very highest respect for the motive which has led many persons to adopt modern Spiritualism. The claims of Spiritualism came to them when their hearts were wrung with sorrow, and it promised consolation. In the midst of their bereavements it seemed a blessed thing to find something that promised to reveal the continued existence and the present condition of their departed ones in another world. Bewildered by sorrow, bowed down by grief, they eagerly listened to those who assured them that the dead were living in another sphere, and that the dead could speak to them from the other world.

Far be it from us to have aught but tenderest sympathy for them in their afflictions and yearnings. There is no harsh word for such people, even while we try to point out where true consolation may be found.

Spiritualism in some form is not a new thing in the world. The attention of men in all ages has been directed to the question whether the disembodied spirits of the dead could communicate with the living.

About fifty years ago, in this country, new interest was given to the whole subject by what became known as the Rochester knockings. In 1847 the Fox sisters and others in Western New York became the centres of certain manifestations which were supposed to indicate the presence of spirits. There has grown up since then a large society of Spiritualists having their circles in nearly every city. The membership is numerous. In a few places they have buildings used for their meetings. Boston has a structure of the most substantial character, the gift of a wealthy enthusiast.

The main idea of modern Spiritualism is that we may hold communication with those who have passed into the spiritual world, sending and receiving messages, and that disembodied spirits make their presence known by audible sounds and by becoming materialized. There are three classes of statements which are made to uphold modern Spiritualism. Let us look at them :

1. There is the moving and tapping of tables and chairs and other articles of furniture in rooms.

2. There are rapping sounds and some other modes of communication by which spirits make their presence known, and information is imparted without the agency of any medium except the inanimate objects themselves.

3. There are a great variety of communications through the agency of persons called mediums who are particularly susceptible to the influence of the spirits, and are favorite means of communication, and who thus become transmitters of intelligence from the spirit world to this.

These are the three general groups of alleged facts. We need not enter into the particulars of a table-turning circle. Let it be assumed that all have heard of the strange proceedings of a table when surrounded by a number of people whose hands complete the necessary magnetic circle. It will move around and sway back and forth, and do many other strange things.

Nor is it necessary to describe a séance with a medium. The mediumistic séances and manifestations are quite varied, but none of them are particularly interesting. There is, perhaps, the thrumming of a guitar in the air while the people sing ; the thrusting of an arm out of a cabinet ; the gliding of a white figure through the darkened room ; the whispering in the ear of the anxious inquirer ; the sound of bells ; the turning on of the light, and the collection of the fee. Then it is over.

Sometimes there is the writing on the inside of a slate which has been fastened against another slate. Then there are rappings and scrapings and displacement of articles.

Now and then a trance medium appears, and in her trance she talks with spirits and tells you what they have to say about you and the pocketbook you lost, or what is to be the issue of your business venture, or the present condition of your great-uncle who died in the Revolutionary War. Perhaps the séance is varied by the presence of some spirit who is bubbling over with

information. Often these very communicative spirits are Indians who have somehow lost their old-time slowness of speech since they went to the happy hunting grounds.

Let us resist the temptation to repeat what some of the spirits are reported as saying.

Poor ghosts ; they haven't grown a bit wiser than when they left us, if the printed specimens of their communications are at all correct. There is Shakespeare, who wrote good poetry once, but now from the spirit world he is sending back to us stuff that would not find space even in a school-girl's album.

There is George Washington, the "father of his country," wise, great, and good. Think of his dabbling in poor poetry, too. If he had written such poetry when he was on earth his friends would have wept over him.

It makes death all the more to be dreaded if there is the probability that people get so absurdly weak when they become spirits.

Modern Spiritualism has done nothing for the intellectual welfare of mankind thus far. It has added nothing valuable to its literature, nor has it enriched science or in any way helpfully enlarged man's mental horizon. If it be said that its main purpose is to bring comfort to the living by establishing communication between them and departed friends, then we have to say that there has been so much of fraud and deception mingled with the whole system that confidence in its declared revelations is checked. It presents the greatest facilities for artful and unprincipled persons to practise gross and dangerous deceptions upon others. The wonder is that, with the constant exposures of frauds,

so many are willing to put such absolute faith in the whole system known as modern Spiritualism. There may be enough in it to excite the inquiry of the curious, or even to awaken the interest of the scientific student ; but judging from the communications which have been attributed to spirits, the world has not been at all enriched thus far, and as has just been said, there has been so much fraud mingled with it that it is amazing how any one can give it even a limited confidence, much less make it a religion, a substitute for Christianity.

One of the freshest and most interesting contributions to the study of this question is the report of the Seybert Commission, published in 1887.

Mr. Henry Seybert, an enthusiastic believer in modern Spiritualism, bequeathed to the University of Pennsylvania a sum of money sufficient to endow a chair in Philosophy. To this gift he attached the condition that the University should appoint a commission to investigate all systems of morals, religions, or philosophy which assume to represent truth, and particularly of modern Spiritualism. The bequest was accepted with the condition attached, and eleven men of well-known ability were appointed to examine Spiritualism.

At their preliminary meeting each member in turn expressed his entire freedom from all prejudices against the subject to be investigated, and his readiness to accept any conclusion warranted by facts. One of the number, the acting chairman, so far from being unprejudiced, confessed to a leaning in favor of the substantial truth of Spiritualism. Well, what did they find out about Spiritualism ? They took great pains, we are told, with their investigation. They conducted it with scru-

pulous fairness. They examined many of the best-known mediums. They took plenty of time for it. They investigated slate-writing, spirit-rapping, and spirit materializations. And what were their conclusions ?

Listen to what they say. They have not discovered thus far a single novel fact. The slate-writing, whereby it was claimed that the spirits of the dead communicated messages to the living, they declared to be nothing more than mere tricks of legerdemain which could be imitated without the slightest reference to spiritual agency.

The spirit-rappings they found to have a purely physiological origin, from the fact that the mediums always knew the rappings whenever they occurred, and could always detect imitations. The conclusion is well-nigh irresistible that the mediums themselves somehow produced the rappings, whether by muscular contractions, or by the movements of joints of the body, or otherwise. It may not be possible to say just how, but their consciousness revealed their own agency. As to spiritual photography, the commission declare that it is worse than childish to claim a spiritual source for results which can be obtained at any time by any tyro in the art of taking composite pictures. You know how it is done. No one can be deceived by it. One picture is placed over the other.

As to the materialization of spirits, they declare that trickery is the leading element in it. They found deliberate attempts at deceiving them, and saw how the thing was done.

Here, then, is one of the most crushing blows ever delivered at Spiritualism. This committee unanimously

concludes that so far as they had examined the subject in its fourfold manifestation of writing, rapping, picture-making, and materialization, the whole thing was based on gross and intentional fraud. They saw how the tricks were done. They saw the tricks imitated. They could employ men, mere jugglers, to do the same things. This report is really conclusive to any reasonable mind, as showing how much of deception is bound up to-day with Spiritualism.

But the report of the Seybert Commission does not stand alone in condemnation of Spiritualism. We have the confession of the Fox sisters that the rappings in which the spiritualistic faith originated were produced by a knack they had of half dislocating their toe joints and knee joints and replacing them with a sudden snap. This can be done by other persons to-day ; but in this odd mode of deception modern Spiritualism was born. Thus it was ushered into being by a palpable deception. The condemnation of Spiritualism begins, then, in the very confession of its founders.

But later on that condemnation is added to by the statements of mediums who have been driven into a corner and compelled to confess that they were tricksters.

The phenomena which profess to be based on a communication with the spiritual world seem to be very largely the result of vulgar legerdemain or of human credulity. Other phenomena, such as the movements of chairs, tables, and such like, may be accounted for. A great many of them can be imitated, designedly imitated. There are others which seem to result from the creation of what some have called the odylic force—a power developed in the human system, in connection

with the brain as the nerve centre. This force allows the production of like mental states in accordance with what is known as the mesmeric relation, or possibly the hypnotic condition. This force seems to be transferred to bodies in contact with the persons in whom it is produced, and hence the moving and tipping of tables and the like. Thus some explain it.

We are becoming more and more acquainted with some of these strange powers that reside in the body, and things which are to-day very mysterious may be matters of course to-morrow.

When you consider the origin of Spiritualism, and the cloud of fraud and deception that surrounds it to-day, you may be ready to exclaim, there cannot be many who would be led away by it. But stop ; do not be too confident ; for, notwithstanding all the evidence which is always accumulating to show the falsity of the claims of Spiritualism, there are thousands of people in all parts of the world who are the victims of this delusion. In every city you will find them holding their séances. They publish quite an extended literature. They make converts, and some of their converts use money freely to build up their sect.

Why does Spiritualism grow ? Why does any one ever become a Spiritualist ? These are pertinent and important questions. There are several answers. Perhaps the most prominent one is the craving of the human soul to have some further knowledge of the departed spirits of those who were near and dear to them in this life. There is a desire to connect themselves in thought and interest with those whom they loved and who have now gone on before. It is a longing for con-

tinued intercourse with those whom they loved on earth. When there is the death of one to whom there has been an especial attachment this longing becomes intense. You have seen the mother bemoaning her child year by year ; the father inconsolable because of the loss of his firstborn. The wife who has leaned long upon the strong arm of the husband finds it very hard to think of not speaking to him again until she passes hence.

When all these cravings of the soul are strongest, and when the heart is most open and tender, then it is that Spiritualism offers itself. It says to bereaved ones, "Come and see and be helped in your grief."

It is with the hope of finding this help that many have plunged into this dreadful delusion and have been held in its snares. Some of them have been persons with no religious feeling up to the time of their being afflicted ; but something has been awakened in them by their sorrow, and not having been properly directed, they have taken up vagaries at which religion and common sense alike reluctate.

2. But converts to Spiritualism are made still further by that strange propensity which is so often exhibited, the giving way to delusions, losing one's judgment and throwing one's self recklessly into a swollen current. It is a most curious fact that there are delusions which sweep over communities like wild-fire. Hence you will find here and there common sense upturned and mysterious outbreaks of excitement in obscure neighborhoods. It is like a contagion. It takes hold of people and deprives them of all their good sense. They are in a state of unwonted excitement. There is a fellowship of kindred thought and feeling, and an enthusiastic in-

terest, perhaps a burning zeal, for the cause. By and by, when the fever is allayed, and they drop into an ordinary state, a few of them are able to escape, but many of them are ashamed to break away. They continue to be Spiritualists in name, hoping for a return of the old interest and for a renewal of their old faith.

3. In accounting for the growth of Spiritualism, we must not leave out of the consideration two classes, the designing and the unbalanced. Judging from the continual exposure of the frauds of mediums, it is not hard to believe that a considerable number of persons have taken it up for what they can make out of it. They are crafty, guileful people, who cajole money from the unwary and gain influence and renown by tricks which entitle them to rank with the swindler and the forger. It is time that some one uttered a warning against a tribe of deceivers who, as spiritualistic mediums and physicians, are luring people to places, where they are not only swindled out of money, but are sometimes exposed to new temptations.

There are some very skilful traps laid for the unwary. It is safest to shun the whole thing. There is nothing in Spiritualism that has ever been of any profit to the world, and the quest for any benefit it offers is apt to lead through ways that are very dark and treacherous. There is so much trickery connected with it that the unwary are very apt to fall into some pitfall if they let their curiosity get the better of them.

There is a class of unbalanced people who have become Spiritualists, or who rather show that they are unbalanced, by claiming to hold intercourse with the dead. The sad fact is constantly before us that there are very

badly balanced people who are not in insane institutions. Some are monomaniacs, daft in one direction, able to attend to business, but otherwise they are deranged. Some are weak and shaken in all directions. Not wildly excited, but their judgment has become practically useless. Their sad lives have broken them, and now they would deal with the dead, would interpret mysterious sights and sounds which they fancy reveal the presence of departed spirits. Just along the borderline of insanity, we say, are these people. Alas ! how many there are who are walking to-day just on the line that divides the sane from the demented, and are indulging in the very speculations which tend more and more to unhinge them. They ought not to be brooding over dark mysteries. They ought to turn their faces upward to the bright sunlight of heaven as God has revealed Himself through our Saviour Christ.

There must be some spiritualists who are not wilfully deceiving themselves or other people, who believe what they say, and who live as if they were ever hearing sounds from the spirit world. To such people we say, "Why cling to Spiritualism as a sect, when in the Christian Church you will find everything that is good in Spiritualism? Besides this you will find there what Spiritualism aims at but never attains."

The Christian Church believes in a spiritual world and in a world of spirits. It believes in the continued life of the departed. It believes that they are not annihilated, not slumbering, but alert and conscious. How much they know of the affairs of this life we cannot tell beyond the assurance that they with us form one family in the Lord. Thus we have fellowship with the depart-

ed. Through our Saviour Christ they are alive upon that other shore as we are alive on this. We commemorate the departed. We do not want to forget them. We cannot forget them. We look forward to joyous meetings, to gladsome reunions, to the extension of bliss in the binding together of those who one by one come into the eternal kingdom. We know that we shall find our home with those who have gone hence in the Lord.

Yes, we say everything that is good in Spiritualism stands clearly before us in the Church of Christ, which cherishes the solemn declaration of the Divine Master :
“ I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whosoever believeth in Me shall never die, and whosoever believeth in Me shall not die eternally.”

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

V.

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

It would be difficult to give a definition of Socialism that would suit all Socialists.

There is a very great difference, for example, between one extreme wing, the Anarchists, who would reduce all existing institutions to chaos, in the hope of building up something better out of the ruins, and another wing known as Christian Socialists, who affirm that there can be no true Socialism unless it is rooted and grounded in Christ. These speak of Him as the Liberator, the Unifier, the Head of humanity. They declare that the Christian Church is the world's first and greatest bond of union between all sorts and conditions of men.

It is rather confusing, then, to use the same word "Socialist" to define two such antagonistic parties as the Anarchists and the Christian Socialists; but however opposed the views of these extreme wings, they do find themselves agreed in being dissatisfied with society as it at present exists, and in claiming that something can be done and must be done to improve man's lot in the present world.

In a general way, then, we may say that Socialism deals with man's condition in the present life as he is a member of society. It covers a great many matters

which affect his temporal welfare. It does not necessarily have anything to do with his future interests. It relates simply to his present happiness.

Perhaps it may simplify the matter for our present purpose if we rule out of this consideration altogether the aims and principles of Christian Socialism. As defined recently by an English bishop, "Christian Socialism is that system of ethics which aims at teaching all men their duty as Christians toward all the different classes in the social system, from the highest to the lowest. Christianity aims at the well-being in this life and in the life to come of every member of the social system."

Whereas once the dominant idea among many Christians was that it made but little difference what a man's surroundings here were, how he was governed, what kind of a house he lived in, what wages he received, so he was told of a better world to come after this—now we are all beginning to realize that the man's surroundings here have much to do with his preparation for a better life hereafter. Christian Socialism takes into consideration the bettering of man's present condition, but with a clear expectation of the continuance of life hereafter. Such Socialism would put down all injustice between men, would check the greed that gets all it can out of the laborer without any adequate return. It would so spread the spirit of brotherhood that men will always be ready to share what they have with others.

Let us except Christian Socialism, then, from the statements which are to follow.

Socialism as referred to here means the movement which is outside of the Christian Church, and which is so often in direct antagonism to Christianity itself.

Perhaps if you think of this kind of Socialism as having no necessary reference to any other world than this, and as aiming to secure more enjoyment from the present life than is possible now, you will have a fairly clear idea of its aim. Its methods for realizing this aim are numerous and vary greatly. In most instances great stress is laid upon land-ownership and co-operative labor, and these loom up very prominently in all discussions of Socialism.

One of the most common conceptions of the system is that Socialism is a movement by which people may own land and capital in common and may use both for the advantage of all. But such a statement as that concerning Socialism would hardly be satisfactory except as setting forth one of the numerous aims of the movement; and yet it is well always to remember that somehow Socialism has to do with the ownership of the soil and its products. Whatever may be its other lines of operation, one is the denial of any absolute proprietorship in lands, and the denial of any special right to the means of livelihood and enjoyment.

It is claimed by some Socialists that these two denials strike at the roots of so many of the miseries of the present social order under which we live that they are willing to have Socialism defined as a movement by which the community is *to gain land and capital and to operate them for the good of all.*

But Socialism is more than a co-operative land company and more than a profit-sharing business enterprise. It touches the whole question of natural and acquired rights, it has to do with the nature of government, it concerns itself with the social relations of man with

his fellow-man, and it enters into questions of education. So wide, indeed, is the scope of the movement, so many points does it touch, that we have still a great variety of Socialists when we have excluded the Anarchists and the Christian Socialists ; and a great variety of remedies proposed for existing evils.

The modern socialistic movements took form about the time of the widespread unsettlement of labor made by the introduction of machinery—say as far back as a century or more ago. The French Revolution also paved the way for new schemes for the amelioration of the woes of men, especially in finding relief from political oppression and the restoration of political rights and freedom. Some of these schemes looking to radical changes in social relations were advocated by philosophers and statesmen, and experiments in communism and co-operative labor were actually tried.

The utopian dreams of Robert Owen, Saint Simon, Fourier, Cabet, the Brook Farm colony, and many others, were the outcome of the socialistic movement.

But the greatest development of the movement has been within the last thirty years or so. Some of us can recall notices of gatherings held in London and elsewhere as far back as that ; but there was such a mixture of German rationalism, philosophy, and Russian political anarchism that we did not know what it meant. About 1872 there seems to have been a partial driving out of the Anarchist element, and now we are told that as an organized movement Socialism has assumed a form wholly free from Anarchism, and delights to call itself *Social Democracy*. But, judging from the May Day demonstrations in some of the European cities, if the Anar-

chists have been expelled there is a great deal of explosive material still left in European Socialism ; so that we must still think of it as a movement with a great variety of branches, and while its one aim is greater comfort here, there are strange methods by which different sections hope to secure that aim.

Passing by countless vagaries which are grouped under Socialism, some of them too wild and absurd for a moment's serious consideration, we find in the programmes of Social Democracy many things to arrest our attention. First of all, *the ownership of land*. They demand that all land, with the mines, railways, and all means of transit, shall be common property. With this they demand that all means of production, distribution, and exchange be common property. There is to be no more private ownership of land. The soil must be worked under Government direction and control.

Here, then, is the proposed substitution of Communism, a system which has never yet been practicable in any form in which it has been tried, although often experimented with. While some things can be better done upon the general co-operative plan than by individuals, it is hardly probable that many things can be successfully done in that way. If practicable, if all ownership could be common, it is probable that the ills that would follow would be greater than under present conditions, inasmuch as the incentives to industry and thrift would be removed.

A second feature proposed is *the repudiation of national debts*. It is hardly a justification of this repudiation to claim that large portions of such debts were rolled up for purposes of war. However contracted,

they were supposed to be for the benefit of the nation, and as such became a burden upon the nation until paid. Besides this, a large part of the income of a very considerable portion of the people is derived from what they receive for the use of money loaned to the Government. It is as legitimate to loan to the nation as to loan to an individual ; and money thus loaned has an earning capacity. There would be great suffering and dreadful injustice wrought by such repudiation.

A third feature is *the abolition of the right of inheritance except in the case of direct heirs*, and in their case the limitation of the amount to be inherited.

While much can be said of "the grasp of the dead hand" upon property, the unworthiness of many heirs, and the bad use they sometimes make of property for which they did not labor, there are many questions suggested as to how far the State should step in to regulate the disposal of a man's accumulations, and of what would be, upon the whole, best for society. The State does interfere now, but it is to prevent one's making a will by which he would perpetuate injustice. The State would protect the rights of the widow and children, and would have no one exercise undue influence over the testator. If the State were to go much further, would it not check proper enterprise and forethought? Would it not encourage luxurious extravagance, upon the ground that there was no use of saving anything?

Without taking up the programme in detail, it may be remarked that its adoption involves the reconstruction of society. There is no likelihood that society can ever be reconstructed upon a different basis from that

on which it rests now. The family is the unit. Community life destroys the family. Competition within proper bounds is stimulating and healthful. The removal of all competition is the death-blow to effort at improvement. Property rights are as old as mankind. The cancelling of all claims to ownership means ultimately roving here and there as the bands of the desert. Protection of the weak, help to the suffering, equal rights for all, these are some of the purposes of government ; but paternalism, carried to its legitimate consequences, leads to general feebleness and becomes a premium upon laziness and inefficiency. No communistic experiment has ever yet succeeded, because it is subversive of the divine order of the family, and contrary to what man in the long run sees to be for his best interests. Men have not been happy in model communities. Nor can they be. Were all the dreams of the Socialists realized to-day, if they could abolish poverty, provide against want in old age, have control of all the usable soil on the earth, and of all the transportation over the earth and fill men's pockets with money—if all these things could be secured, it is doubtful if the aggregate of human happiness would be increased. New ills would be introduced. New difficulties would arise. And then the process would have to be gone over again and again. There can be no doubt that some of the schemes of many Socialists are not founded upon wisdom, and would be repudiated if they really had the opportunity to experiment with them, and to see the results.

In addition to the unwise and impracticable character of much that has become part of their programme, the two things which are most to be deplored are, first, the

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2 antagonistic attitude which many Socialists hold toward the Christian Church, and, second, their failure to see that the Church's method, which is Christ's method, for securing reforms is likely to be the safest and best in the long run. Christ's method is to have men treat men as brothers. The Church is a brotherhood of all sorts and conditions. Love is the fulfilling of the law. When love rules, rights are regarded.

This unfriendly attitude toward the Church is taken because many men have misunderstood the purposes of the Church, and have been unwilling to accept its teachings and submit to its restraints. It is false to declare the Church unfriendly to the poor and the enemy of the working man. They have no truer friends to-day than the Christian Church. And besides this, there is no more powerful agency for the reform of wrongs and for making life happier than the Christian Church. Just in proportion as the ideal of brotherhood which has always been held up by the Christian Church is realized in that degree will men lead peaceful, happy, and useful lives here and be also prepared for the blessedness of the future.

Some phases and sections of modern Socialism are decidedly to-day anti-Christian, yet Christianity itself has given the impulse to the study of all those questions which relate to man's happiness in the present life. Men have not always recognized the origin of those impulses which have led them to ask how they can make the present life better, happier, and nobler for their fellow-men. It is the *Altruism* of Christianity, the desire to give even one's self that others may be happy.

The unfriendly attitude of Socialism toward Chris-

tianity makes its progress more alarming than the general adoption of many erratic views would be ; for it disregards the purpose of the Christian religion, which is to teach men that the present earthly life is but preparatory to the life to come. Socialism also overlooks the help which a consideration of future responsibility gives in the performance of present duties. If men are to be judged in the future for neglecting their brothers here, let the warning of retribution be added to every other consideration that secures brotherly treatment.

While we thus deplore the alienation of the Socialist from the Christian Church, we are compelled to admit that, from his standpoint, he has some justification. Alas ! that he finds any.

Unhappily, not all Christians are living Christianly ; and the Socialist, seeing the poverty of their lives, claims that the Church is not the friend of all. Think of the many rich and how they use their wealth. They do not deny themselves. They think their money can buy any pleasure and cover up any shame. They give nothing to the poor but scant and unwilling alms. They are haughty and unbrotherly.

Think, too, of the many people who possess so much of this world's goods and never share any part of what they have with others. One man builds a palace and shuts his neighbors out of it. Another buys a glorious painting, and the eyes of only a privileged set ever look upon it. Another feasts his rich neighbors who have plenty, and overlooks the poor to whom no feast days bring even enough.

Think, again, of the gorgeous raiment in which so many women are attired while their poorer sisters know

not how to get shelter from the winter's cold. And what is worse about that rich raiment is, that to produce it and to make it, some wage-earners may have had to toil for what barely keeps soul and body together. Luxury is often enjoyed at the price of the laborer's degradation and suffering.

Think, too, of the indifference shown by many employers of labor as to the condition of their employés. When the work is done and the wages are paid, what are they to each other? Nothing. In the estimation of some, *nothing*. Obligation ends with the work.

No wonder, then, that men point the finger of scorn at such miserable failures to carry out the teachings of the Master whom we profess to serve. No wonder that men ask, "Is it true that the Church is the friend of all classes?" But there is a better view.

The Christian Church is a divine institution, divinely founded, divinely protected. Its mission is to gather into one family all who will try to reproduce the life of Him who is the Brother of man. The imitation of Christ is the realization of truest manhood and of truest brotherhood.

When the employer treats the employé as his brother, difficulties vanish. When the rich hold their possessions as stewards, their wealth is sanctified. When, in a word, men, whether rich or poor, and whatever their station, model their lives after the life of Christ, then have they brought nearer to earth the kingdom of heaven, in which dwell righteousness and peace.

WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM?

VI.

WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM?

THE newest substitute proposed for Christianity is Agnosticism. It is an outgrowth of the scientific research of recent years. It expresses itself in an unwillingness to accept anything in religion unless upon the same experimental evidence demanded in science. The fundamental principle of Agnosticism is that knowledge is restricted to what are called phenomena, to those things which are capable of being apprehended by the senses.

Hence, as religion deals mainly with spiritual verities and pertains primarily to the spiritual nature of man, there has grown up a disposition on the part of some to reject religion—not to deny it absolutely, but to press it aside as something with which they need have but little to do, because, say they, it may have no substantial existence. It may be nothing but a product of men's fancies. In plain words, religion is ignored. It is supposed to be without any solid foundation. It may be a mere figment of the imagination. It may be anything else. The Agnostic does not concern himself to know just what it is. He has concluded to get along without it, and therefore he says he knows nothing about it.

The term Agnostic was brought into use by Professor

Huxley in 1869, although that eminent scientist is hardly to be held responsible for *all* the vagaries of thought which have clustered around the convenient title of Agnosticism.

At times the late Charles Darwin seemed inclined to accept Agnosticism. Once writing to a friend, he said that he sometimes, not always, thought he could best describe his state of mind by saying that it was like that of the Agnostic. When he wrote *that* he was defending himself from the charge of Atheism. He was not willing to be called a disbeliever in God. He would not take that position. He would rather be called an Agnostic—that is, one who did not know.

There are many other scientists who have been cited as Agnostics. Tyndall and Huxley and Darwin form a trio of influential leaders of thought who have been styled Agnostics. There are lesser names in the scientific world whose position has been substantially the same. It may almost be affirmed that a few years ago Agnosticism was the creed of science whenever science spoke of religion.

Happily it is not so to-day, for scientists are beginning to recognize the fact that different forms of evidence may be equally conclusive, and that there are different domains, and what is applicable in one domain may not be in another. The Agnostic is not so confident as he once was that he has the only measuring-rod of truth in his hands. There is coming to him a doubt as to what a few years ago was boastfully set forth. Men are seeing that one line of proof may be just as positive in philosophy, for example, as another is in science. And we are quite sure that a good scientist may

not always be a good metaphysician, or a good lawyer, or a good theologian. When a scientist goes out of his way to discuss questions that belong to another domain, if he carries his own scales and his own measuring-rods with him, he may find himself unable to reach correct results. Thus you cannot be sure that the scientist is a safe adviser if you call him in to settle a question of morals. He may discuss learnedly the value of facts and the result of experiments, and yet leave the whole question of the right and the wrong of an action untouched. Out of his sphere he may err.

The scientists have been specially out of place when they have invaded the domain of religion and have virtually said, "We have come now to test your doctrines. We want to analyze them and see what are their component parts. We shall divide and measure and compare, and finally get hold of what is essential and tell you what you ought to accept and what you ought to reject." But instead of going on as they started, some have sprung aside with the declaration, "We really do not know whether religion is true or not. We cannot use our measuring lines and scales. We know nothing, therefore." *This is Agnosticism.* You must remember, then, that Agnosticism is not a denial of religion. It is simply the unwillingness to declare either in favor or against religion. "We do not have the same evidence," say the Agnostics, "that we have in science."

Agnosticism is not a very coherent system. It has no doctrines of its own. It does not affirm or deny anything positively. It simply says, when pressed to accept anything that requires other than scientific evidence, especially anything that asks for the exercise of faith,

"I do not know. I cannot accept anything I cannot prove. Your declaration may be true, but I do not know. There are some things I do know. There are other things I do not know. I simply reject anything I do not know. I reject every kind of evidence except what is verified by phenomena."

That is the attitude of many to-day toward religion. Let us look at this new foe of Christianity. Calderwood defines Agnosticism as a theory of that which is declared unknowable. This theory assumes its most definite form in the denial of the possibility of any knowledge of God. How can such denial be sustained? How can any one be sure? Note the inconsistency of the position. The Agnostic first virtually admits the existence of somewhat beyond the ken of *ordinary* evidence. That he calls the Unknowable. Then he grows dogmatic. He forms a theory about it and puts it in the shape of an unsupported dogma. "Why," he says, "we cannot know anything about it." How does he know that? What about other kinds of evidence? The Agnostic is not consistent when he says, "We can know nothing about God or a future life." He sweeps religion aside as if it were a series of speculations with which no one need be specially concerned just because ordinary evidence does not apply. Here is an illustration of the absurdity of his position. A man stands by the side of the astronomer looking to the north, some clear starlight night, and he says, "I can count a hundred stars off there in the region of the polar star." "Yes," says the astronomer, "there are that many, but how very many more?" "No more than I can see and count," says the man. "Give me a little time till I look close-

ly. Wait now and I'll count them all." "But," says the astronomer, "there are many more than you can see. If it were possible to count each one that is visible to your eyes, there are still more." "How can there be any more than I can see?" the man persists. "I'll not believe in the existence of those I cannot see." Then the astronomer quietly produces his telescope and bids the man look through it. Need we apply the illustration?

Grant the position of the Agnostic, and you have presented as a substitute for Christianity the declaration that we can never hope to know anything beyond a very narrow realm. "We can never," says the Agnostic, "know anything about the nature and existence of God or of any kindred subject. Our faculties are such now, they are so limited, so imperfect, that we need not try to use them in feeling after God and things spiritual, for we cannot know whether there is any God, or spirit, or future existence, or immortality, by the forms of evidence which we have adopted in science."

Now, what shall we say to this?

The replies to Agnosticism are numerous. It will be possible now simply to suggest one of them.

Professor Huxley said: "Agnosticism is of the essence of science, whether ancient or modern. It simply means that a man shall not say he knows or believes what he has no *scientific* ground for professing to know or to believe." Just so. We can all see that that is true in science. I have no right to say that I know or believe anything in science unless I have a scientific basis for my knowledge or belief.

We go further and say that we have no right to de-

clare that we know anything unless we have a satisfactory basis for our belief.

The question, then, resolves itself into whether any evidence can be adduced that is as satisfactory as that form of evidence called scientific. Or, to put it in other words, Is there a satisfactory basis for the alleged facts in religion ?

There are three of these alleged facts which are of fundamental importance : first, that there is a personal God ; second, that we have souls ; third, that there is a future life.

Take, now, these three main facts of religion : that there is a God, that we have souls, that there is a future life. How are they supported ? What is there to lead us to believe each of these three statements ? We admit at once the utter impossibility of applying the *same* tests to settle these questions as may be applied in science. But we have equally convincing proofs that God exists, and we gain also some knowledge of His character so that we declare there is a personal God and He is thus and so.

And so we take up the question of the present existence of the soul and the continued existence of the individual. We do not weigh or measure or apply chemical tests to see if there is a soul in a body. Nor do we sweep the underworld with some new astronomer's glass, to see what has become of the individual who once dwelt in this clay tenement now deserted.

No, we cannot get a satisfactory basis that way, no more than we can tune a musical instrument by applying a lotion to its strings.

We get at the truth in a different way, and, as we think,

in a way that finally gives us something as solid to rest upon as anything presented in science. But to go over the whole process would require more time than you have to give now ; and so let us simply glance at what we have to convince us of the existence of God. If there is a God, we may have immortal souls and there may be a future life. One point proven leads to the others.

How, then, do we know that there is a God ?

Not to enumerate them all, we say that a strong proof of the existence of Deity is the purpose which pervades all creation.

“ How do I know that a camel passed my tent last night ? ” said an Arab chief to one who doubted the existence of Deity. “ By the tracks I saw in the sand ; and if I see the evidences of God everywhere, shall I not believe that He exists, even though I look not upon Him ? ”

The argument from design has never been refuted. This world bears evidence of being the product of an intelligence in its creation, and hence somewhere there must be an intelligent Creator.

Means are adapted to ends. The most delicate and complicated bits of machinery go on with their work until the foreordained end is reached. The whole universe bears evidences of plan and purpose.

Let us deny this assertion for a moment and see what must follow. If this world is not due to purpose, it must be due to chance. Assume for one moment that there is no God and try to account for the origin of the world by chance if you can. There is nothing between purpose and chance. You cannot speak of law, for that is simply a mode of operation. It must be purpose or

chance. Now, try for a moment to fancy that this world and all of its wondrous contents came into being by chance. Do you know what is just as probable as that? Why, it is just as probable as to take up a bag of letters of the alphabet and cast them broadcast over the floor of this room and then have them come together and form one of the plays of Shakespeare. It is just as probable as that. Yes, it is just as probable that the world came by chance as if you could take your columns of figures in your arithmetic, copy them down on slips of paper, let the breezes carry them abroad, then gather them up again and find them carefully arranged so that they tell just exactly how often your pulse has throbbed, how often your eyelids have closed since you were born. Such results as these are as probable as that the world came into being by chance.

To exhibit the folly of such a supposition, consider this. Let all who read this page spend five years in multiplying together the largest figures you can put on your slates. Then spend five years more in squaring and cubing the result. Then add all the product of all your calculations together in one mighty total, and it would still fall short of expressing the number of probabilities against a single probability for the world's having come into being by chance. We have, then, strong evidence gained in this way in favor of a purpose in creation. Now, a *purpose* implies a Deity. Further, if there is a purpose evident in creation, a purpose implies personality, and we find ourselves reaching up to the thought of a Deity who exists apart from the things He has made. The unconscious world is not God. God is not nature ; He is separate from nature as a garment is apart from

the one who wears it ; but back of nature, giving some suggestion of Himself from this outer manifestation.

Personality is as evident in nature as purpose, and hence we are convinced that the Designer is distinct from and superior to the design.

Now let us go further. When we find in the design so many evidences of force, excellence, and beneficence, we say this personal God must be powerful, must be wise, and must be good, and so on, step by step, until we have before us some ideal of a Being who is omnipotent, all-wise and loving.

Then revelation comes to our aid and gives us clearer knowledge concerning Him whom we have but dimly comprehended in nature until we look upward and say, "He is our Father. We are His children." The aspirations of the human soul find their satisfaction in Him. Our soul is athirst for the living God. We cannot rest until we rest in Him. The revelation which God has made of Himself, especially in the Incarnation, finds its response in man's very nature.

As it has been well said, if there were no infinite goodness we would not be drawn toward it. If there were no God, and if we had no souls, we could have no knowledge of the past and no hopes of the future. We instinctively recognize the possibility of a love that is purer than ours and which is ever satisfying. We also recognize a will that is stronger and holier than ours which will guide us into paths we could not otherwise find.

We are as sure of our facts as the scientist can be of his. Our intuitions, our observations, our experience and the testimony of others against the background

which any opposite suppositions would create, present to the mind of the Christian a body of evidence as strong as can be produced in behalf of science.

We claim that Agnosticism, therefore, is a shrinking from a domain of truth which is just as convincing as the domain of science.

Much of the Agnosticism of our day is mere intellectual laziness or some new drapery for that infidelity which is always changing its form.

It is an affectation of ignorance by some whose business it should be to find out all they can. It is often a mock humility which conceals beneath itself that arrogance which says there is nothing it cannot conquer.

Agnosticism is virtually saying sometimes, "No, I know nothing about these things, because there is nothing in them that is worth knowing. If there were anything worth knowing, would not *I* have grasped it?"

We need have no fears that Agnosticism will become a successful substitute for Christianity. So long as people are born into the world with these intuitions which all thus far have had, so long as people will ask what is their relationship to the power that is superior to them, so long as they ask what is the future to be for them, that long will they want something better than Agnosticism.

The Agnostic is religious without knowing it. He has in him religious capacities. He has religious aspirations. He is living in God's world, and this is a religious world. If men were only to open their eyes and obey the best aspirations of their hearts, they would see that religion is a part of our very humanity. In God we live and move and have our being. "It is because

He is always with us that men are sometimes apt to believe that He is nowhere to be found," that He is not in His own universe, and that by ignoring Deity they would live as if He were not.

As an illustration, Dr. Momerie, whose works have been freely drawn upon in this chapter, reminds us of the story of the fishes who sought for the waters of the sea, and of the bird who wanted to find the air :

“ ‘ Oh, where is the sea ? ’ the fishes cried,
As they swam the crystal clearness through ;
‘ We’ve heard from of old of the ocean’s tide,
And we long to look on the waters blue.
The wise ones speak of an infinite sea ;
Oh, who can tell us if such there be ? ’

“ The lark flew up in the morning bright,
And sung and balanced on sunny wings,
And this was its song : ‘ I see the light ;
I look on a world of beautiful things ;
But flying and singing everywhere,
In vain have I searched to find the air.’ ”

The Agnostic is living in God’s world. God touches him at every turn. God is speaking to him every hour and by all the events of life.

Let the Agnostic seek the Lord. He is not far from every one. “ We are the offspring of God,” and if we will, we can realize our relationship to Him as children of the Almighty Father, brought near to His loving heart by the wondrous grace of the Incarnation.



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